

Connections is a districtwide publication presented to you by the  
Office of the Superintendent, West Hartford Public Schools

# Connections

*With the West Hartford Public Schools*

## Connections

*with the West Hartford Public Schools*

*Connections is a districtwide publication presented to you by the Office of the Superintendent,  
West Hartford Public Schools, 50 South Main St., West Hartford, Connecticut 06107  
Phone (860)561-6651*

### New Web Pages Will Improve Communication and Information Sharing

(continued from page 2)

our district as well. This new web-based application provides a number of up-to-date communication services:

- Website content management to upgrade and improve our school and district websites
- Information Tools (e.g. teacher pages, photo gallery, calendar, online document storage)
- Communication Tools (e.g. forums for collaboration, surveys, newsletters, room & resource reservation)
- Secure Intranet workspace accessible from anywhere, not limited to within the school district
- Teacher Tools (e.g. drop box, lessons, assessments, homework, rubric builder, lesson plan builder, post videos)

#### Distribution Of **Connections**

An on-line version of **Connections** With the West Hartford Public Schools is now available at <http://www.whps.org/connections.pdf>. If you do not wish to have a copy of **Connections** mailed to your home, please email [connectionsout@whps.org](mailto:connectionsout@whps.org) with your name, address, child's name and school. Thank you.

*Connections is printed on 100% recycled paper.*

### Upcoming Events

**Hall/King Philip, "Luv" Choral Concert**  
February 13, 2012 at 7:00 PM  
King Philip Middle School Auditorium  
No charge

**Solisti, Chocolate Café**  
March 10, 2012 at 2:00 PM & 7:00 PM  
Town Hall Auditorium  
\$15.00 table seating/\$10.00 balcony seating  
For information and tickets, call 231-6038

**ArtBeat**  
Townwide Student Art Exhibition  
West Hartford Art League Clubhouse Gallery on Buena Vista Road  
March 7 - April 1  
No charge  
Opening Reception, March 7, 3:00-7:00PM  
For information, call 561-6638

**Hall, Pops 'n Jazz**  
March 16, 17 at 7:30 PM  
March 22, 23, 24 at 7:30 PM  
Hall High School Auditorium  
For tickets and information, call 232-4561, ext. 1856  
Free Performance for Senior Citizens: March 21 at 2:00 PM

**Conard, Musical "Beauty & the Beast"**  
March 16 & 17 at 7:00 PM  
March 18 at 2:00 PM  
Conard High School Auditorium  
For information and tickets, visit [www.conardhighschoolmusical.com](http://www.conardhighschoolmusical.com)  
Free Performance for senior citizens: March 15 at 1:30 PM

**Middle School Festival of Music**  
The Belding Theater, Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts  
April 4, 2012 at 7:30 PM  
For information, call 561-6638

**Hall, Play: "Our Town"**  
Hall Black Box Theatre  
May 3, 4, and 5 at 7:00 PM  
For tickets and information, call 232-4561, voice mail 1066  
Free Performance for senior citizens: May 2 at 2:00 PM

**Inter-Elementary School Festival of Music**  
May 24, 2012, 7:30 PM  
The Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts, Mortensen Hall  
For information or tickets, call 561-6638

### School Community Meets Challenge of Storm

Our historic snowstorm and power outage in October/November certainly played havoc with all of our lives and the education of our children. The most tangible long-term effects of the storm are that the last day of school is now scheduled for June 20th, if there are no further snow days, and that February vacation has been shortened to an extended weekend for President's Day. School will be in session on Feb 22nd, 23rd and 24th. Not all of the effects of the storm were negative, however.

This storm was unlike any that West Hartford has seen in any of our lifetimes. While we were without power and unable to open schools, there remained one bright spot. Conard High School had power, and thanks to the extraordinary efforts of so many, it became the best shelter in the state. We can always be so proud of our schools and the role they play in educating our children. During this crisis, our schools offered solace and protection for our most fragile citizens. Student athletes came in to set up four hundred cots; our nutrition service workers came in to prepare meals for the needy; our nurses who normally care for children came in around the clock to care for a different segment of the population; our custodians kept the building safe and clean. There are literally too many people to thank. Over the course of a week, we had more than a thousand people volunteer in one way or another to take care of our West Hartford families, our friends, and our community.

The Conard shelter was a tribute to the commitment of the West Hartford Public Schools to the safety of all of our citizens. One of the difficulties in the aftermath of the storm was in transitioning back to our regular school schedules. Our maintenance, custodial, and town Department of Public Works staff all worked around the clock to clean up the areas around our schools and the walking routes that are children would be taking. Because of their work, as well as the vigilance of our parents, our reopening went as smoothly as possible. While we all hope to never experience anything like this storm again, we are also very proud of the way our school community answered the call when we were needed.



*...we are very proud of the way our school community answered the call when we were needed.*



*Mission* To inspire and prepare all students to realize their potential and enhance our global community

#### A Look Inside:

- Technology Blueprint
- Student Success Planning
- New Assistant Principal
- Board of Education Profiles
- Improved Web Pages
- Upcoming Events



## A Technology Blueprint: Planning for the Future



Over the past eighteen months, we have been undergoing a self-study to identify what is needed to make the West Hartford Public Schools a leader in educational technology. We want to be proactive and create a plan that will ensure that our students are getting the education they will need to compete as they go on to college and varied careers.

As we began to put together this Technology Blueprint, we were guided by four central questions:

- How do we effectively integrate technology for 21st Century learning?
- What do students need to know and be able to do to use technology effectively?
- What do teachers need to know and



be able to do to guide and instruct students while effectively integrating technology?

- What infrastructure, hardware, and software do we need to actualize our vision for students?

To answer these questions, we met with many outside consultants, finally deciding to contract with CELT, the Center for Educational Leadership and Technology. To help us put together our Technology Blueprint, CELT specialists and their president, John Phillip, spent the spring and summer months meeting with a central steering committee, visiting and analyzing our schools and meeting with students, parents, teachers and our IT professionals. Their work focused on getting a complete picture of what the

district has for technology and how it is being used. Key findings reported by CELT were:

- The town and schools work very well together in partnership in technology integration.
  - Access of technology is not equitable across all schools and students. Although the student to computer ratio in West Hartford looks good at 2:1, this includes a significant amount of out-of-date technology with incompatibility concerns.
  - All teachers and students have Internet access, but web filtering is seen by many as too restrictive and that results in limited use.
  - We have attempted to provide limited wireless access to the network, but this has not been a priority investment by the district.
  - Job descriptions for the IT Department need to be created, as well as a clear, well-understood chain of command.
- Finally, CELT's recommendations, both short and long term, included:
- The school system must put in place a wireless network system in all of the schools so that students and teachers have access to the Internet. As a part of this process, much of the wiring

- system that is currently seventeen years old will need updating.
- We must develop and adopt a strategy for implementing a curriculum development and learning management system.
- We must develop a formal scope and sequence for student technology competencies as well as 21st Century information literacy skills, and embed them into the WHPS core curriculum.
- WHPS should develop a Bring Your Own Technology plan that would create a portal for students and staff to access information both inside and outside of the school setting in ways that allow greater accessibility to information.

As we begin implementing these changes and improvements in our infrastructure and curriculum, we will provide updates on our progress.



### New Web Pages Will Improve Communication and Information Sharing

One of our goals as a district is to improve communication and information sharing between and among our schools and our families. With that goal in mind, we have begun to redesign our district and school web pages to ensure greater continuity and to provide easier access to information for parents, students, and staff. Over the next three months, our current websites will still be operational as we build the new ones. Once the new websites are complete, we hope that you will find them easier to use and more informative. The program that we are using to redesign the website, SharpSchool, has numerous other benefits for (continued on back page)



### New Assistant Principal for Sedgwick Middle School

We had one new administrator join the West Hartford Public Schools Leadership Team last month. Mr. Jeffrey Sousa has been appointed the Assistant Principal at Sedgwick Middle School. Jeff is a graduate of Southern Connecticut State University, where he received his Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Masters of Science and his 6th year degree in Educational Leadership. Jeff, who is fluent in Spanish and Portuguese, began his teaching career in Westport prior to moving to Wallingford. He has taught 1st Grade and 5th Grade, as well as math, science and Spanish at the middle school level for the last ten years. During his tenure in Wallingford, Jeff has had a tremendous impact on students, teachers, and parents as a teacher leader. His passion for helping teachers and students and his collaborative leadership style will serve the Sedgwick community and our school district well. Administrators need appropriate support structures, resources, and administrative training at the district level. Our Comprehensive Mentoring Program ensures that each new administrator is carefully assigned a mentor whose purpose is to provide professional support through mentoring and other complementary programs. We are confident that Jeff brings a skill set that blends well with our current group of administrators, and we are excited for what the future holds.

### Helping Students Achieve Post Secondary Educational and Career Goals

On May 26, 2010, the Governor signed into law Public Act 10-111: AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATION REFORM IN CONNECTICUT. This comprehensive law directs the Connecticut State Department of Education and public school districts to accomplish many tasks, including recording students' career and academic choices in grades 6-12. The local board of education shall collect information for each student enrolled in a public school (beginning in grade six) that records students' career and academic choices in grades six to twelve, inclusive. This requirement supports the CSDE reform agenda to have students develop a student success plan.

Student Success Planning is an individualized, student driven process designed to help every student achieve post secondary educational and career goals. The process focuses on three core components (Academic Development, Career Development, and Social, Emotional and Physical Development) that drive a series of experiences for students across the grade levels. The delivery model for these experiences include: 1) whole school, or grade level, or course level experiences; 2) the School Counseling 6-12 Curriculum Framework; and 3) individual and on-line experiences with documentation (i.e., Bridges and Naviance). This process creates multiple opportunities for students to acquire and demonstrate academic, career, and personal life skills. It also provides students with on-going support to set and monitor goals for personal and academic growth.

To accomplish this, the school system has created an action plan organized around the core components that articulates a set of experiences that are designed to help every student be successful. The plan specifies the key or essential questions that students are expected to answer in grades 6-12 inclusive, as well as the range of opportunities in each of the three core components.

Thus far, actions taken to date include:

- Established Student Success Plan Committee
- Developed a draft document defining the vision and purpose of student success planning and the action plan to achieve Student Success Planning across grades 6-12
- Incorporated and embedded the School Counseling Curriculum into the plan
- Identified the delivery models, methods and programs presently in place at the secondary level and identified assured experiences for each grade level
- Initiated pilot of draft plan in grade 6 this year

Tasks and actions that still need to be completed include:

- Research and finalize vehicle(s) for collecting and tracking information for each student, grades six to twelve
- Review of grade 6 pilot results to make any adjustment, modifications or changes for full implementation next year
- Plan for grade 7 pilot implementation for next year (2010-2013)

### Board of Education Profiles

#### Profile: Ellen Brassil

- BA from Drew University and MS in Library and Information Science from Simmons College.
- Completing a Masters in the School of Education at Sacred Heart University.
- Currently works full time as Director of Libraries and Knowledge Services at Baystate Medical Center.
- Published in library and information science books and journals.
- Book Review Editor for the *Journal of Electronic Resources in Medical Libraries*.
- Member of the editorial board for the *Journal of the Medical Library Association*.

Ellen Brassil is the mother of four sons who all are now currently in college or grad school. All of boys went through Duffy, Sedgwick and Conard High School. Ms. Brassil previously served on the Board of Education in 1997 and again in 2001 (when she served as secretary). Elected in November, Ellen serves as the Republican Financial Examiner. Ms. Brassil has over 25 years experience in academic or health sciences libraries, and she has developed and taught online classes. Until recently, Ms. Brassil served on the West Hartford Advisory Commission for Persons with Disabilities. She is a volunteer for St. Peter Claver Church and Hartford Hospital Pastoral Services. The owner of a Welsh corgi named Tony Blair and an eight year old rabbit, Ellen loves Irish history, horses, and art.



#### Profile: Mark Overmyer-Velazquez

- Ph.D., M.Phil, M.A., Yale University, Latin American and Latino History.
- B.A., University of British Columbia, dual degrees in History and German Literature.
- Currently works as the Director, Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, University of Connecticut.
- Associate and Assistant Professor, Department of History, University of Connecticut.
- Co-author, *Connecticut Latinos: Evidence from the Connecticut Samples of the Latino National Survey New England*. Storrs, CT: University of Connecticut Roper Center for Public Opinion Research.

Mark has been the Co-President of the Florence E. Smith Elementary School PTO from 2010 to the present, and he worked with the interview committee conducting a search for a new principal. He has served as a soccer coach in the West Hartford Co-Recreation Youth League. Mark was named a Fulbright Faculty Fellow (Chile) in 2011, and he has received several National Fellowships. He has edited various books dealing with the history of Latinos as well as the history of Mexico and U.S. migration. Presently serving on the Advisory Board, Freedom University, Athens, Georgia, Mark is fluent in English, Spanish and German, with a basic understanding of Portuguese and French and a reading knowledge of Hebrew and Yiddish.